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Imaginary Kings

Royal Images in the Ancient
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LE ROI IMAGINAIRE: AN AUDIENCE WITH THE
ACHAEMENID KING.*

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[The king] himself, so it is said, established himself at Susa or Ecbatana, invisible to all, dwelling in a wonderful palace... many gateways one after the other, and porches many stades apart from one another, were secured by bronze doors...¹

The portrait of the invisible king in the pseudo-Aristotelian *de Mundo* is intended to evoke the structure of the divine world. It expands on a preoccupation in Greek sources with the inaccessibility of the worldly Oriental ruler, attributed to elaborate court protocol and the necessity of security.² In specific contexts, regal remoteness is often a negative trait, used to denigrate pretenders or decadent incumbents; it can both enhance ostensibly sociable competitors and measure the status of petitioners and their intermediaries.³ Royal inaccessibility or seclusion derives some of its impact from a contrasting ideal of direct encounters with the king. This ideal finds visual and textual definition in the scene of a royal audience.

An encounter with the Great King is a significant theme in narratives about the Achaemenid court in Greek and Biblical literature, but it is most clearly articulated in images showing the enthroned king with attendants and approaching figures. The most elaborate surviving formulation of this was at the royal capital of Persepolis, where early in the fifth century, two large stone reliefs showing an archetypal king and heir fronted the double staircases leading up to the massive audience hall begun by Darius I.⁴ The relationship between iconographic impressions of the audience to the setting and procedure of actual ceremonies is difficult to establish. Our surviving evidence testifies largely to a corona of presentation and perception. This article will focus on the visual dissemination of the idea of access and communication in the audience scene; the wider context provided by parallel literary evidence could expand our interpretation of how these scenes were viewed.

* I would like to thank the editors of this book for their help and encouragement in presenting this paper as part of the original (very congenial) seminar series of summer 2003. In revising it, I have benefitted not only from their comments, but also the interesting and acute questions of the seminar audience, not all of whom I will have succeeded in answering.

¹ Arist. [*Mund.*] 348a.

² Hdt. 1.99, behind the battlements of early Ecbatana '...the king should be seen by none'. Herodotus also plays on the selective visibility of Smerdis and Darius I. On writing as a tool of this invisibility and the contrasting visibility of subjects, see Steiner 1994, p.131-2.

³ Thuc. 1.130, on the Persian pretensions of Pausanias; Xen. *Agex.* 9.1-2, Agesilaus is visible and open in contrast to 'the Persian'; Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.19-20, the public told to choose favoured intermediaries from Cyrus' guard (surrounding a visible but inaccessible Cyrus).

⁴ For their place in the original apadana façade, see Root 1979, fig.11.

The king enthroned in audience is a particularly intriguing subject to consider as a projected and viewed royal image. As a freeze-frame image of an encounter between monarch and official, or monarch and subject, it is a visual focus on the border between ruler and ruled.⁵ As both an iconographic and rhetorical image, it also lies at the active and very uncertain boundary between the centralised visualisation of power and its independent reception. Charting the quotation and manipulation of the Achaemenid royal audience far beyond the physical boundary of the court, we can perhaps begin to map the independent transformation of the king in the eyes of his subjects. The outside aspirations and expectations of the king, which may have influenced the independent reception of the audience scene, result in a monarch remade in many imaginations.

The visual frame for royal audience can be traced from early Achaemenid formulations in the royal architectural setting at Persepolis. The point of its transformation into a reference point for the diverse empire is supplied in surviving evidence by seals and sealings used in royal and provincial administration. Seals and other mobile media provide an illustration of a key phenomenon in the transmission of Achaemenid iconography: the refraction of images through a variety of materials and scales.⁶ The diverse cultures under Persian rule encompassed multiple streams of styles and motifs which continued to suffuse visual media adapted to Achaemenid themes. Accordingly, my interest here is in the conscious use of the scene as a conceptual structure housing the Persian king, rather than in the detail of stylistic synthesis or diffusion of individual motifs. Visual variations may indicate intended changes in meaning at which we can now only guess. But the survival of some textual interpretation of stereotyped royal audiences (for instance, those in Greek from beyond the king's territory), suggest that the image may communicate ideas about the subject's imaginative relationship with the Persian king. Potentially this could deepen our appreciation of the flexibility of images in the Achaemenid period. We could come to view them as points at which the identities of ruler and subject were constantly re-visualised and renegotiated.

⁵ By its nature, this frontier at which king and high status officers or subjects meet is a space where status can be contested and asserted, as well as merely an arena for the reinforcing of a hierarchy. This potential is most evident in satirical or subversive treatments of the audience scene, below.

⁶ This phenomenon lies behind my use of a frequently borrowed title originating in the *musée imaginaire* of Andre Malraux in 1965. I have appropriated it in order to evoke both the creation and active reception of the image of the Achaemenid king. The original 'musée imaginaire' concerned image reproduction in the 19th and 20th centuries and its effect on the mass experience of visual art. Eliding the distinctions of space, material and scale, reproduction of art images enabled the imaginative collation of those works in viewers' minds; a personalised artistic canon could be formed independent of the real location and scale of the original works. Two subsequent studies of ancient near eastern iconography make reference to Malraux's book: Amiet 1973 and Winter 2000 (whose discussion of Neo-Assyrian imagery raises interesting questions about the relationship between monumental and glyptic carving).

ROYAL AUDIENCE AT PERSEPOLIS

The remains of the mural decorations of both Persepolis and Susa make up a relatively small proportion of the extant images of the Achaemenid period. Nevertheless, they represent a highly visible sample of motifs directly associated with the king's environment. The core stone sculptures remaining at the royal capital of Persepolis therefore provide a central reference point for Achaemenid royal images. The audience scene appears in two different buildings at Persepolis, but in none of the Achaemenid glazed-brick friezes so far reconstructed from Susa or Babylon.⁷ The earliest of the Persepolitan scenes were the most extended; they consisted of two large, mirror-image orthostat reliefs forming the central panels of the decorative north and east façades of the audience hall or apadana building.⁸ These were later moved to a porticoed and ornamented courtyard in the less accessible Treasury building, in the south-east of the terrace.⁹ In both locations, the reliefs were at ground-level, on a scale which placed the viewer within the height of the carved frame, inside the scene (fig.1).¹⁰

The space of the king and the identically clad heir standing behind him are defined separately by the raised dais supporting the throne.¹¹ The comparatively

⁷ Development of the apadana mound at Susa is generally thought to have begun earlier than Persepolis; inscribed additions to the Neo-Babylonian palace in Babylon date to the reigns of Darius II and Artaxerxes II (424-369 BC). Due to the lack of finds from Hamadan, the subject matter of the stone reliefs there is unknown.

⁸ Reliefs, Tilia 1972, fig.6, 7; Root 1979, fig.10 shows the particular location and direction of these reliefs ('c'); reconstruction, Root 1979 fig.11. Photographs, north façade, Schmidt 1953 pl.16B, east façade, Schmidt 1953, pl.17A, & Tilia 1972, fig.5. Since the excavation of Susa in the nineteenth century, 'Apadana' ('palace') is the name conventionally applied to the prominent columned halls apparently designed for large assembly, with three or more side porticoes, there and at Persepolis (and occasionally as a generic architectural term for columned halls of apparently governmental or royal use in other centres); its ancient use is securely attested only in texts of Artaxerxes II from Susa and Hamadan (Kent 1953,154-5).

⁹ Schmidt 1953, pl.119, 122, 123. The reliefs, their removal and restoration fully discussed in Tilia 1972, 175-208; the time range for their removal stretches between the reigns of Artaxerxes I and III (Tilia 1972, 205-207). Details of the decoration and finish of the scenes remained unfinished (Roaf 1983, 116).

¹⁰ Cf. Schmidt 1953, pl.121. This relief from the north façade of the apadana was removed to the Museh Melli, Tehran as the better preserved of the two. The second is still *in situ* in the Treasury. A clear drawing of the entire eastern relief is available in Tilia 1972, fig.3 and, of the surviving reliefs, Roaf 1990, figs.6,7. Fig.1 here does not unfortunately show all the figures in the scene; there are a total of four figures behind the heir, two within the baldachin and two guards, beyond. Photographs of the surviving reliefs do not show the baldachin frame, which was damaged by their removal to the Treasury (Schmidt 1953, pl.149). For an imaginative 3-D view based on these iconographically formulated scenes see Michael A. Hampshire's drawing in Hicks 1975, 68-9.

¹¹ The figure behind the king is identified as his heir or 'crown-prince' on the basis that he mirrors the king's image in clothing, pose, height and style. He is unlike any attendants, who can be identified as servants or high status courtiers, shown with the king elsewhere. His size clearly distinguishes his higher status as compared to everyone else in the scene apart from

large empty space left in front of the king reaches to the edge of the *thumateria* or incense burners, which mark the limit of the approach of a visitor in riding costume.¹² He bends forward in a bow, lifting his face towards the king and putting his hand to his lips in a gesture of respect to the king.¹³ The baldachin enclosing the whole scene is decorated with pacing lions and a winged disk, a symbol usually interpreted as indicating or representing the god Ahuramazda (fig.3).¹⁴ The complex throne sits on lion's paws, while the footstool features bull's hooves.¹⁵ The high status and privilege of certain court members are marked out by their visual proximity to the king, but their non-royal identity is indicated by their shorter height. These figures, like those of the king and heir themselves, are not individualised portraits, but generalised, unlabelled images designed to accommodate the identities of all those in their position. The only surviving relief showing named individuals was the relief on Mt. Bisitun, where they are offered as witnesses to Darius I's version of events leading to his acquisition of the throne. In contrast to that measure asserting his initial legitimacy, the long-term building project of Persepolis perhaps aspires to perpetual dynastic stability, particularly in the juxtaposition of king and heir, among nameless courtiers.¹⁶

In their original position, the audience orthostats were the part of the apadana façade that projected furthest out from the interior of the massive columned hall.¹⁷ Flanking this first double staircase were figures representing the rest of the society of the empire. These courtiers, soldiers and groups of ethnic representatives walk

the king, whose seated figure he equals in height. Compare the smaller size and different characteristics of Darius' named co-conspirators in the seizure of the kingship c.522 B.C. standing behind him in the Bisitun relief (Root 1979, pl.VI). There is no evidence to suggest this heir was designed or perceived to represent a specific son of Darius; it appears to be part of a programme giving Darius' rule a dynastic rather than an individualistic character.

¹² The riding or 'Median' costume of this figure is quite generic. He is usually understood to be an official in the act of introducing other officials or subjects into the king's presence, but he leads no one by the hand and addresses the king directly himself. For the proposed identification options, see Root 1979, 238 (who opts for 'grand marshal') and for a discussion of the classical references to the 'Chiliarch' or *hazarapatiš*, the traditional identity assigned to this figure, based on the idea that this image shows the detail of court procedure, see Briant 1996, 234-5. Like the whole composition, the figure is perhaps abstract enough to receive more than one identification.

¹³ For the idea that this could represent the gesture known as *proskunesis*, see Bickerman 1963, 241ff.

¹⁴ On the baldachin, Tilia 1972, 183-190. Root (1979, 169-71) provides a good summary about the identity of the winged disc. The winged discs on the baldachin do not have the human figure added in larger representations on tombs, door jambs and Bisitun.

¹⁵ The hierarchy of lion over bull reappears in the beast combats flanking the apadana reliefs, addorsed animal head capitals and on the inner and outer borders of the baldachin itself (fig.3), a hierarchy which is sometimes interpreted cosmologically (Root 1979, 236 n.14). For the throne leg design see Jamzadeh 1996.

¹⁶ For the transition to 'ahistoricism' in royal texts, see Sancisi-Weerdenberg 1993, 158, 'This is how it is, has been and will be.'

¹⁷ For the apadana's position on the terrace see an aerial view, Schmidt 1953, pl.6 and plans in Moorey 1988, figs.23a-e.

in the direction of the access stairways, but externally also converge on the central enthronement of the king; guards stand behind, subjects walk towards him.¹⁸ In the unreal space of an iconic court, the presentation of an enthroned king with attendants and subjects asserts his hierarchical difference, but also presents him as open to display and outside approach. Facing the portion of the terrace which was left open and wide of access, the scenes projected an idea of a formal royal encounter for a freshly formed hierarchy. Unlike the apadana audience reliefs, these scenes would have remained visible to the most accessible area of the terrace throughout the Achaemenid development of Persepolis.

The second use of the audience scene in the Hall of One Hundred Columns shows revision and reframing of this floor-level model.¹⁹ In this hall, the audience scene, minus an heir, is several feet above eye-level, crowning four rows of symmetrically arranged armed guards in two sets of door jambs (figs.2-4).²⁰ Enthroned kings on the north and south doors are paired with the hero-beast combats on four sets of east-west doors, apparently exhibiting a different facet of royal identity.²¹ The petitioner approaches from the direction of the real visitor entering the hall from the open terrace. The condensed scene gains a fly-whisk bearer and loses the symmetrical pair of each attendant at the edge; the king's height appears a little more exaggerated. A baldachin and above, an enlarged, anthropomorphic winged disk would have topped these compositions. Several traces of bright colour painting, incised decorative details and slots for gold overlay have also been discovered on these versions of the relief, which would have increased its visual impact.²² In the southern door jambs of the One Hundred Columned Hall and also the single doorway showing isolated enthronements in the Central Building, the layers of guards are replaced by ranks of subjects, ethnically differentiated by their dress, supporting the throne platform straight-backed, with outstretched arms.²³ These southern door jambs, without their approaching petitioner, do not give mass access to the other side of the terrace and the royal palaces. The massive doors are a symmetrical illusion and lead instead onto a narrow corridor leading only indirectly into more restricted areas.

¹⁸ Root 1979, 88.

¹⁹ Schmidt 1953, 129-34, fig.59, pl.89. This structure, built largely in the reign of Artaxerxes I, is often known as the 'Throne Hall' after the audience and enthronement reliefs on the north and south door jambs. Since this can prompt misleadingly concrete conclusions about the building's function, I am using the older (and more simply descriptive) title applied to it by Herzfeld, derived from a traditional Persian (and at the earliest, Middle Persian) name of the site, 'Sadsutun'.

²⁰ Schmidt 1953, pl.91.

²¹ Schmidt 1953, pls. 114A-115B. On the ambiguous identity of the 'royal hero' in these combats, see Root 1979. The different facet may correspond to the spatial role of these doors, which led onto dark corridors flanking the central hall, a space that in the mentality of Mesopotamian palace decoration, would need sealing with apotropaic motifs.

²² Tilia 1978, 40-41, 44-47, 65-66, pl.xxxi-ii.

²³ Schmidt 1953, pl.108-9.

An audience with the Persian king as it appears at Persepolis is a revised, stylistically overhauled and semiotically fine-tuned descendant of the enthroned neo-Assyrian king as found, for example, in the painted and carved wall decoration of royal complexes at Nineveh and Til Barsip.²⁴ Yet the generic motif of enthroned monarch with attendants, in a banqueting or presentation context, would have been recognizable in the iconographic traditions of much of Achaemenid territory. As an established part of the ancient visual repertoire of western Asia, it could bestow an archaic authority on new occupants.²⁵

The similarities between the Achaemenid and neo-Assyrian audience scenes follow a general pattern in the sourcing of legitimacy in both textual history and imagery by the Persian kings beginning with Cyrus II. Persian evocations of Assyrian power had the advantage of exploiting the memory of a multi-ethnic empire at two century's distance, leap-frogging their own recently defeated enemies, the neo-Babylonian monarchy (626-539 BC). A diachronic exchange of legitimacy was created by the similarity of the new enthronement to those surviving in seals or (local) rock reliefs and palace ruins in the landscape.

The proportion of space given over to supporters of the king, his subjects, attendants and guards, in the architectural frames of the Persepolitan audience reliefs, is indicative of a desire to define the empire's peoples in relationship to the Achaemenid king. Designers at the royal capital adapted existing icons of subjection into metaphorical images of equally ranked ethnicities, supporting the king on his throne or standing in a scene of worship or recognition with Ahuramazda.²⁶ The equal and measured contribution that each ethnic group makes to the central power of the king was a key feature of Achaemenid ideology. It was also articulated in multilingual texts at Susa and at Naqshi-Rustam, near Persepolis, where the early royal tombs were located. The 'foundation charter' of the royal complex, expanded on a traditional rhetoric of Near Eastern imperial collecting; the specialised skills of distinct peoples, and exotic materials from the edge of the empire were blended in palace creation in an old urban environment.²⁷ Darius' tomb inscription went further in emphasising that an individual subject's qualities were measured, as if in a balance held by the king, and rewarded suitably:

(16-17) The man who cooperates, him according to the cooperation, so I reward him. He who does harm, him according to the harm so I punish... (24-27) What a man does or

²⁴ Dating from the eighth to the seventh century. Til Barsip, Roaf 1990, 112; Gabelmann 1980, 23-26 & 40f.; wider context of Near Eastern presentation scenes described by Root 1979, 237.

²⁵ Iconography of presentation and enthronement can be seen in third millennium Mesopotamian glyptic (Collon 1987, 36f nos. 114ff.); second millennium developments, Collon 1987, 68 nos. 295-7; early first, *ibid.*, 88 no. 406 (in Iran).

²⁶ Schmidt 1953, pls. 108-11; Schmidt 1970, pl. 63; Root 1979, 133-53.

²⁷ Kent 1953, 143-4, DSf.

performs according to his powers, [therewith] I am satisfied, and my pleasure is abundant... (50-52) O subject, very much make known [of what] kind you are, of what kind your ab[ilities], of what] kind your conduct!²⁸

The subject in turn could recognize Darius' ability to command with excellence in peace and war.²⁹ This kind of rhetoric not only promoted the king's role as arbiter of merit, but also drew the subject into a kind of mutual recognition within the hierarchy.³⁰ This vision, though defined from the top down, encouraged an imaginative engagement with the idea of a watchful monarch.³¹ The royal audiences, fringing the open terrace at Persepolis, were perhaps an invitation to the subject to participate in an exchange of recognition and benefit.³²

The analysis of royal iconography, alongside official inscriptions, as a metaphorical definition of the facets of Achaemenid power works relatively well within the surviving palace walls of the central capitals. They offer a fairly consistent style of image and an holistically planned environment, whose primary definition took place from the end of the sixth to the mid-fifth century BC.³³ This consistent environment, made evocative of archaic power, was first produced at a stage when Achaemenid dynastic legitimacy was still being proved within the first three successions. Later sponsors of building projects, such as Artaxerxes II and III, pointedly maintained the illusion of consistency in their selective additions at Persepolis, Susa and Hamadan, in order to highlight their genealogical inheritance and to demonstrate their ability to revive and maintain the royal environment. It is not hard to call the images in these buildings 'official' in the sense originally used by Root to define her study of royal images.³⁴

But analysis of iconography in the Near East is also subject to the reproduction and alteration of images in multiple media. Many components of Achaemenid monumental imagery are representations of mobile artefacts, or amplifications of

²⁸ Kent 1953, 140, DNb II.16-27, adapted. Lines 50ff. are a revised, restored reading of this distinct extension (lines 50-60) of DNb, based on a fragmentary Aramaic translation of the Old Persian, edited into a later fifth century text of the Bisitun inscription found in Egypt, see Sims-Williams 1981, 1-7. Original inscription, Schmidt 1970, pl.20.

²⁹ Kent 1953, 140, DNb II.27-32.

³⁰ See Sancisi-Weerdenburg's discussion of the tuning of royal inscriptions into 'an attempt to make direct contact between the living experience of both king and reader' (1993, 159-160).

³¹ This idea of a universally rewarding (and punishing) arm of the king is clearly related to the fearsome reputation of his mysterious 'Eyes' & 'Ears', e.g. Xen. *Cyr.* 8.2.10-12. Cf. on similar notions within the Roman Empire Hekster in this volume.

³² For the 'giving' king as the just rewarder of merit, see Briant's summary, 1996, 314-318.

³³ Roaf 1983, 146-149.

³⁴ Root 1979, 1f., 15f.: 'commissioned in the service of kingship, designed by high-level officials who were in all probability directly responsible to the king himself...planned as an imperial programme which was intended to project... a specific set of consistently imposed images of power and hierarchical order.'

minor arts such as inlaid jewellery.³⁵ Most of the elements of the audience scene are not just transferrable as a whole, but are also highly mobile as artefacts and prestigious motifs.³⁶ The nomadic habits of the Achaemenid court must have required that privileged royal space also function independent of an architectural setting.³⁷ Yet audience scenes with Achaemenid influence spread far beyond the destination of any wandering king.³⁸ Apart from perished paintings or tapestries, the only widespread vehicles for entire composite scenes were seals and their sealings.

GLYPHTIC DISSEMINATION & TWO AUDIENCE SCENES IN SATRAPAL CAPITALS

This dominance of the image repertoire by glyptic is common to many periods in the Near East. Seal images are unusually pervasive by virtue of their use in royal and private administration, their ability to spawn multiple identical copies and the high mobility of both original and impressions. Within Achaemenid studies, glyptic has become one of the major focuses of publication and discussion, with the increasing availability of excavated corpuses of sealed tablets and bullae.³⁹ This increased discussion builds on an existing strong tradition of stylistic analysis of surviving cylinder and stamp seals. Among the phenomena being considered in Achaemenid glyptic are the multiple styles of carving and shapes of seal in simultaneous use in large archives such as those stored in the Treasury and 'fortification' area at Persepolis.⁴⁰ In such a diverse artistic context, the individual commissioning and consequent personal choice of motifs and style has become a more important factor in the analysis of seal design. Recent analyses of both sealing archives and individual excavated seals visualise a spectrum of styles,

³⁵ Moorey 1998. The apadana reliefs at Persepolis as functioning like scaled-up seal impressions, Root 1979, 269; Garrison 2000, 145: the apadana façade a multiply sealed tablet testifying to a '...transaction..., a carefully manipulated statement of the relationship between center and periphery, Persian and foreigner...'

³⁶ For example, pacing lions similar to those on the hems of the king's robe, on his baldachin, and on the palace walls of Susa have been highly mobile, Miller 1997, 42.

³⁷ Some imitation of material elements seen in the royal audience is suggested by the survival of similar throne fragments in Samaria, Tadmor 1974.

³⁸ See the two Greek examples, below pp.53-4. For dissemination on the most general terms, the record is surely held by an enigmatic equestrian audience scene with a seated figure usually interpreted as a goddess, depicted on a felt wall hanging from Pazyryk barrow 5 in the Altai mountains, Siberia, (which incidentally also contained a Persian carpet carrying motifs directly comparable to Persepolitan examples), also the most unusual adaptation, Rudenko 1970, pl.154, 289.

³⁹ Sealings on documents of the Murašû firm, Babylonia, Bregstein 1996; cache of sealings from Ergili / Daskyleion, comments in context of other archives, Kaptan 2002, 17-27; sealings of the Persepolis Fortification tablets, published thematically, Garrison & Root 2001, (with summaries of other corpuses and discussion of archives, pp.26-39).

⁴⁰ Styles in the fortification archive, Garrison & Root 2001, 16-21.

motifs and combinations available to the high-status seal commissioner.⁴¹ The interaction of different styles and archaic or regional attributes can be seen taking place in the audience scene in glyptic.

Two sealings from within the palace administration, impressed by seals carved with the enthroned king show the extent of variation even in the shadow of the columned halls. Fortification sealing 22 shows an enthroned king and two approaching figures; this is a recognizably archaic composition, but in the Persepolis context, it recalls the apadana delegates and the central audience relief.⁴² A rather different cylinder seal used in the Treasury complex during the reign of Xerxes carried a simplified, square-framed audience scene of two figures, one seated and one standing, both of whom are crowned.⁴³ In the surviving impressions of Treasury seal 26, the scene of king in audience (with his heir?) is favoured over the balancing image of a led horse.⁴⁴ In other surviving seals, the audience scene can be seen with other selected variants and combinations of recognizable Achaemenid iconography. For example, an unprovenanced cylinder from the Louvre combines an audience scene centred around a large incense burner with a popular motif of the crowned king overpowering two fabulous beasts, shaded by a winged disc.⁴⁵ Other examples show a syncretism with older styles and themes, a cylinder now in Zürich places a seated regal figure with several characteristics of the Achaemenid audience blended with elements of a traditional Babylonian banquet or presentation scene.⁴⁶ The latter example demonstrates that any active dissemination of an official Achaemenid version of enthronement such as that precisely formulated at Persepolis fed back into a regional visual memory of older examples. The available repertoire also included sources such as actively used heirloom seals, accessible archives, pre-Achaemenid rock reliefs and architectural images in Iran and elsewhere in the empire. Conscious archaizing of style, motifs and compositions was a significant trend at Persepolis and elsewhere.⁴⁷ Glyptic variants, still strongly evoking the Persian king's identity in dress and attributes, should be taken into account when assessing independently formulated versions in other materials further afield in the empire.

⁴¹ See, for example, Garrison 199

⁴² Garrison 2000, 147, fig.25, classified as being carved in the local, simple 'fortification style' (2000, 131).

⁴³ Schmidt 1957, 17, pl.8, nos. PT4 443, 702 & 758, carved in or before 483 BC.

⁴⁴ An image also paralleling the audience relief, eg. Schmidt 1953, pl.29, 35, 37 etc., this motif is also used decoratively in ivory, textile and inlaid jewellery.

⁴⁵ Collon 1987, 150, no.659, Louvre AO 2405; the beasts are winged bull men. Three-figure contests were not chosen as permanent mural motifs at Persepolis or Susa (but Persepolis featured the two-figure combats with an uncrowned figure) but were very popular as glyptic images on both cylinder and stamp seals, see Garrison & Root 2001.

⁴⁶ Moorey 1988, 48, fig.46a, compared with a Babylonian example (fig.46b). Further examples of blended audience / banquet scenes on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets are to be published in volume II (Garrison 2001, 68).

⁴⁷ Garrison & Root 2001, 17-18.

Two further examples of the Achaemenid audience, made and used within the empire at Daskyleium and Memphis, testify to its manipulative quotation and absorption into different functional contexts. Both, from satrapal centres, reflect back further on the transmission and circulation of the audience scene and enthroned king in the court. The first, a glyptic example from the western edge of the empire, suggests the extent to which iconography from the royal capitals could be consciously adapted in other media within satrapal administration.

A number of bullae, sealed by roughly one hundred and eighty-five distinct seals and showing evidence of having sealed papyrus rolls (and therefore perhaps from an archive), were excavated from a burned context at the mound of Ergili, a site interpreted by its excavators as the ancient satrapal capital Daskyleium.⁴⁸ The images, recently fully published by Deniz Kaptan, were impressed by a variety of seal shapes and styles; no narrow date range was offered by the archaeological context, and perhaps extended from the mid-fifth century to the beginning of the fourth. A large seal carrying a striking image of a royal audience was preserved on twelve surviving bullae (fig.5).⁴⁹ Kaptan's compiled drawing shows a scene that draws closely on the monumental One Hundred Columned hall incarnation, rather than the many possible simplifications.⁵⁰ The seal engraver has attempted to reproduce carved detail on the king's hair and throne, the patterning on the textile throne cover parallels the incised and painted detail of the door jamb scene at Persepolis.⁵¹ The winged disk, which surmounted all the monumental audience scenes in the structure of the baldachin, is transferred to hovering mid-scene – a placement used in other cylinder seal compositions. The two *thumateria* still define an open space in front of the king. In style and format the seal appears to have been intended to echo the monumental relief.

The differences are relatively minor, but possibly illustrate a tailoring of the audience scene to the seal commissioner's own requirements. The king's fluted crown sprouts two hanging ties, perhaps representing the cloth ends of a diadem-like band attached to the headdress.⁵² His right hand is not holding a slanted staff,

⁴⁸ Kaptan 2002, vol.1, 8-10; Garrison 2002, 69-70.

⁴⁹ Description of the fragments and compiled drawing Kaptan 2002, vol.2, 50-55, pls.47-59, full discussion of the scene in the context of other eggs, vol.1, 31-40, of the style, vol.1, 113-115, of the royal name inscription, 194-5 (Schmitt); earlier published (extended) drawing, Kaptan 1996, fig.1. An apparent difference in the carved inscription visible on one of the sealings means that there may have been more than one seal carved with this scene (a direct copy intended to reproduce its predecessor?) Kaptan 2002, 113.

⁵⁰ For example, another sealing in the Daskyleion corpus, DS19, selects two abbreviated icons associated with royal images: an enthroned figure holding a shallow cup and a three-figure contest (Kaptan 2002, vol.II, 67, vol.I, 28-31, where Kaptan places it in the context of presentation and banquet scenes). For a useful tabulation of the elements included in DS4 and the Persepolitan versions, see Kaptan 1996, fig.2.

⁵¹ Kaptan 1996, 263-4.

⁵² Kaptan 1996, 263 n.32, with references for the fluted crown n.33-37, compares these ribbons with the tie attached to the headgear of a silver statuette resembling a standing king from the 'Oxus treasure' BM ANE 123901. Such a combination does not appear at Persepolis (but

but is nevertheless raised and therefore resembles a gesture of acknowledgement. The small approaching figure deferentially raises his hand to his lips but does not bend at the waist. The figure behind him, in a court robe and bearing a spear, is similar to those standing behind the king, but outside the baldachin, in the Persepolitan scenes; he may be either the person being introduced into audience, or the person supervising it.⁵³ He has been granted the greater visual status in comparison to the sizes of the other attendants, though he remains shorter than the seated king.⁵⁴ The surviving sealings are abbreviated, rolled impressions that select different parts of the extended scene, but tend to focus on the enthroned king and the first approaching figure.⁵⁵

Partially visible in some of the impressions is an Old Persian inscription written horizontally above the scene which spells out the royal name, Artaxerxes.⁵⁶ Like the generalized royal image itself, the name is not individualised and could remain relevant to any of the five monarchs to bear that name, although is most likely to be dated to the reign of the first (465-424/423 BC).⁵⁷ In a recent survey of royal name seals in use at Persepolis, with reference to this Daskyleion seal, Mark Garrison observes that while sealings preserving an inscription of a king's name often relate to the activities of high officials, they show no evidence of being directly used by the king himself or his immediate family and close supporters.⁵⁸ His conclusion that such royal-name seals are wielded by officials engaged in 'mundane state administrative activity' suggests that this seal's monumentalizing audience scene is a distant evocation of close contact with the king.⁵⁹ The use of a Persepolitan model shaped around personal requirements may be an aspiration to privilege, rather than an automatic affirmation of it. The seal's adherence to the palace reliefs is far closer than any surviving impressions from seals used in and around the palaces themselves; it is perhaps a compensation for its distance from both its model and subject, in a provincial administration.⁶⁰

could have been painted in, although no traces have been noticed). For these ties/ ribbons as a diadem, see Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.13 where he imagines 'a *diadema* around the *tiara*' of Cyrus II.

⁵³ I hesitate from assigning the traditional identities of the audience scene to this example, although they may in fact be intended (Kaptan 2002, 33, 40).

⁵⁴ Kaptan 2002, vol.I, 37.

⁵⁵ Kaptan 1996, 271 figs.4-7, 2002, vol.II, 50-55.

⁵⁶ Kaptan 2002, vol.II, 50, 52, vol.I, 194-195.

⁵⁷ The corpus and this image in particular are related to imagery in the reign of Artaxerxes I by Kaptan; if DS4 was scrupulously copied on replacement seals, the royal name may have been a less specific marker (Kaptan 2002, 33, 40).

⁵⁸ Survey, Garrison 2001, 71-73. There is no evidence for 'either the personal or office seal of the king' in the published Persepolis tablets, (Garrison 2001, 72).

⁵⁹ Garrison 2001, 73-74, dependent on a similar pattern of usage between the two administrations.

⁶⁰ Kaptan's discussion highlights the expression of loyalty and dependence to which such a close reproduction of ideologically weighted imagery testifies (Kaptan 2002, 40).

That the Daskyleion seal's image could be the result of reactive reception rather than automatic reproduction tallies well with the analysis of other extant examples.⁶¹ The evidence as it survives testifies to the manipulation and revision of elements of royal images in variable contexts rather than the uniform replication of official iconography. The formulations which generate an environment of archaic authority, dynastic consistency and abstract coordination of generic representatives in the royal capital are required to adapt to accommodate different meanings in satrapal administration and beyond. In the varied regional examples we find the reception side of the original iconographic message being articulated.

This flipside to official iconography can be seen in a variety of different media beyond seals, but particularly in funerary contexts. The formulation of personal monuments, like the production of personal or semi-official seals, again highlights the possible role of commissioner-driven selection of motifs. A recently published stele from Egypt is one example of a transformed audience scene which relates to a fuller glyptic context as well as to the stone reliefs of the architectural court (fig.6).⁶² This funerary stele was found in the Gisir el-Mudir area of Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis.⁶³ The limestone stele was excavated from a well documented context, but this context was secondary, in a later, undated burial which provides no secure date for its primary use.⁶⁴ The hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian inscriptions, prayers to Osiris, name the deceased, Djedherbes, and his father as Artam, his mother as Tanofrether – one a Persian, the other an Egyptian name.⁶⁵ The clean shaven Djedherbes undergoes Egyptian burial rights in the upper register. The publishers highlight several features which recall Achaemenid motifs and styles of representation: the tail feathers of the winged disk, defined musculature in the lion table. It would be interesting to speculate whether the stylistic and iconographic mixture of Egyptian and Persian features is a conscious effort to assert a dual ethnic identity for the product of a mixed marriage.

The publishers are uncertain of the identity of the seated figure in the lower register who clearly recalls the king in the Achaemenid audience scene;⁶⁶ this uncertainty must remain as long as this example, which lacks the figure labels of other Egyptian stelae remains unique. The structure and representation of the

⁶¹ Compare Kaptan 2002, vol.1, 38-40 & 1996, fig.3.

⁶² Excavated in 1994 and fully published in Mathieson, Bettles, Davies & Smith 1995, with description by Davies & Smith and historical commentary by Davies.

⁶³ Mathieson *et al* 1995, 23.

⁶⁴ Mathieson *et al* 1995, 25-6.

⁶⁵ Smith in Mathieson *et al* 1995, 33-37.

⁶⁶ The uncertainty extends to all the figures in the lower register; although there is an 'intrinsic probability' that the central figure is Djedherbes, there remains even some ambiguity about its gender: Davies in Mathieson *et al* 1995, 38. The identities suggested for the enthroned figure are the deceased's father, the Persian Artam, and a satrap; his identity as the Great King is considered the least likely option due to differences from the iconography of Persepolis (including its 'essence of informality').

scene parallels an Achaemenid audience in the strong similarity of the robed, bearded, seated figure, and his throne, and the pose of the inactive attendant behind the second offering table, who clasps his (or her) right wrist with his left hand (a pose adopted by still attendants in the audience scenes at Persepolis).⁶⁷ Some of the apparent divergences from Persepolitan stone representation nevertheless commonly recur in glyptic variations of audience and presentation scenes. Given that stone relief styles and compositions formed only one strand of imagery in use within Achaemenid administration in Iran, scenes produced for individuals across the empire cannot be compared only to one strict canon of official iconography. The plentiful Neo-Assyrian and contemporary glyptic parallels for the shallow bowl raised to the lips of the regal figure associate it with the generic themes of banqueting and food presentation; these continue to be actively adapted in the glyptic substrata of the Persian royal audience. The second presentation table also has Mesopotamian glyptic parallels. A variant crown on the king's head is not necessarily a sign of different status, since coins, cylinder and stamp seals show that independent versions of the royal figure could incorporate differences in style of headdress.⁶⁸

The figure presenting both goods and a garlanded ring to the regal figure takes up the centre of the scene; on this personal monument, the offerer becomes the focus rather than the receiver. The ornamented ring he holds out in the direction of the king is not an obvious element from Egyptian tradition, but the gesture of holding out a ring to the king does exist in Achaemenid stone reliefs. First in the Bisitun relief, and then on royal tomb reliefs and Persepolis door jambs, Ahuramazda holds a small ring over or in front of the king.⁶⁹ The ring there derives from the symbolism of Mesopotamian investiture, where it would be offered by a god as a symbol of the monarch's power and its divine source.⁷⁰ To view this offered ring as a contribution to the monarch's sovereignty offered by a *subject* would be quite a transformation of the model of kingship bestowed by

⁶⁷ Mathieson *et al* 1995, 33 and for other Egyptian incorporations of the gesture, n.38. Achaemenid definition with its extensive Mesopotamian and Elamite background as a representation of court etiquette, Root 1979, 272-276: it appears in the apadana reliefs perhaps '[connoting] the idea of being at 'parade rest'', on the apadana audience panels, the attendant behind the heir clasps his wrist as does the shorter attendant behind the petitioner in the Hundred-Columned hall audience.

⁶⁸ I suggest that the headdresses of DS4 and the Saqqara stela still signal royal status in these cases, even though iconography from Persepolis offers no confirmation. Debate continues about royal crowns: Henkelmann (1995/6, 292) concludes that only the uniform dentate crown can definitely identify a king (*contra* personalized crowns for each king). A less absolute approach has been suggested recently; Garrison & Root (2002, 57-58) generically class variants as heroes' 'headdresses' and suggest that a figure in combat wearing a crown could have a permeable identity, where it alludes to 'the symbolic potential or reality of a non-king acquiring an attribute of kingship as proof of his status as part of the collective identity of the 'Persian Man''. This fluidity in the use of the king in non-royal individual status definition is compatible with the trends of manipulation and adaptation suggested here.

⁶⁹ Moorey 1988, 18 fig.14, 24 fig.30.

⁷⁰ Root 1979, 197-8.

divine patronage. Achaemenid royal inscriptions emphasise the god Ahuramazda's agency in first bestowing the kingship on Darius I, or imbuing him with the qualities of kingship and then his protection of the dynasty and its achievements.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Achaemenid iconography and rhetoric incorporated subject territory and individuals within the representation of royal power to an unprecedented degree. The enthroned king was directly represented supported by symbolic representatives of the ethnic groups he ruled. The inscriptions of Darius I, and later accounts of service in royal court and armies, represented the relationship between Persian king and subject as one of the measured exchange of favour.⁷² The independent modification of the Achaemenid royal audience on this stela could represent a statement of material support to the king. The tables of produce and symbolic ring might be a permanent statement of direct contact with and beneficence to the Persian king. By logical inference, a beneficent relationship with the king has a proportional effect on the giver's status.⁷³ If this interpretation comes close to representing the thought behind the commissioner's choices, this version of the audience moves the encounter on from the moment before exchange, to a permanent illustration of beneficence and proportionate status. The idea of the audience as the arena for a subject's demonstration of his value and, by exchange of honour for value, his status, is paralleled in literary sources. The articulation of ethnic allegiance in this same context (suggested here by the mixing of Egyptian and Persian forms) also recurs. The latter theme becomes particularly prominent in audiences with the Persian king imagined around Greek protagonists.

NON-SUBJECTS IN AUDIENCE WITH THE KING

So far I have only used examples from within the king's territory and apparently within either satrapal administration or connected with the associated Persian *diaspora*. The wider occurrence of audience scenes suggests that independent reception and use of them to articulate projected relationships with the Great King

⁷¹ DB, Bisitun, describes the kingship restored to Darius and his family with the help of Ahuramazda (due to his truthfulness) e.g. Kent 1953, 120, DB1.50ff.; DNa lines 1-8 (Naqsh-e Rostam) illustrates Ahuramazda's wider role as a creator (Kent 1953, 137-8) while the later DNa, lines 4-5, 45-9, develops the idea of royal skill bestowed on Darius I by the god (Kent 1953, 139-40). 'Other gods' are also credited in royal inscriptions, with Mithras and Anahita named in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II.

⁷² See p.45 above, and Xen. *An.* 1.9.17-18 (the donor being an aspiring king).

⁷³ It is notable that the Payava sarcophagus from Xanthos (BM 1898.10-20.142), another funerary monument for which the audience scene is extensively adapted around the representation of an individual (and his satrap Autophradates) carries an incomplete inscription that may record his capture of a rebel, a contribution to the stability of satrapal rule (see Briant 1996, p.691-692).

and representatives of his authority went much further.⁷⁴ Two interesting examples refer to Greek protagonists, whose relationships with Persian royalty frequently brought both fame and riches, disaster and censure. Some artisans or commissioners in the Greek Mediterranean seem to have perceived the flexibility in the audience scene that allowed it to be sampled and adapted within local hierarchies.⁷⁵ The following two examples date from the second half of the fourth century BC, but both also appear to be retrospective imaginings of historic encounters between king and Greek champion.

My first example is one face of a carved statue base that once supported the bronze image by Lysippus of the pankratiast Poulydamus at Olympia, set up two generations after the athlete's victories (fig.7).⁷⁶ The base depicts the Skotousan's legendary exploits, one of which is a visit to the court of the Great King in Susa.⁷⁷ Here, a simple audience scene format has been transformed into a visual satire of the royal encounter. The traditional spatial hierarchy of the stone-carved enthroned king is inverted and the audience scene supports the athlete rather than the king being elevated by others. The strict sidelong view of the king is adjusted to an open three quarter position laying the king open to the more direct view and approach of the viewer. His space is no longer his own and is not defined in front of him by *thumateria*. Instead, his space is invaded by the heroic athlete, who not only breaks open the peaceful meeting of the audience by committing violence on a member of the immortals at the king's feet, but even denies the basic functionality of the audience by turning his back on him. The femininity perceived by the Greeks in the Persian court costume is emphasised by the king's upthrown hands, a womanly gesture of despair echoed by the apparently female attendants.⁷⁸ The scene, despite being a comprehensive satirical inversion still bears some parallels with a more conformist audience: the athlete is demonstrating his abilities in the space of the royal court, witnessed by the king

⁷⁴ A possibility pointed up by Kaptan's discussion of key Anatolian parallels, 2002, 38-40 and in the progressively greater degrees of adaptation of the iconic image of the (solitary) enthroned regal figure in coinage and stamp seals on the western edge of the empire (see eg. Boardman 2000, figs. 5.55-6). The greater abstraction inherent in the latter examples make them difficult subjects for comparison in the present discussion, presenting another permeable facet of the king's iconographic existence (coinage can also evoke divine as well as royal Achaemenid authority, and the scaraboid seals, associated with Levantine and other Phoenician centres, exhibit a broad Egyptian/ Egyptianizing style, see Culican 1968, figs. 2, 3, I am grateful to Dominique Collon for pointing out this parallel and reference).

⁷⁵ Or (more generally) to represent related worlds; Miller (1988, 84-86) cites DS4 as one possible route for the transmission of the Achaemenid royal audience model to Attic vase images of Silenos brought in captivity to Midas, so that the king might learn wisdom from him (this parallels Greek narrative perceptions of this scene in the Achaemenid context, see pp. 57-9 below) after the mid-fifth century BC (ibid. 1988, 81).

⁷⁶ Olympia Arch. Mus. Inv. L 45. The statue was set up by the Sikyonians in the second half of the fourth century (see Gabelmann 1984, 81 n.337, taf. 10).

⁷⁷ A narrative for this image is given in Paus. 6.5.7-8.

⁷⁸ For the common representation of women as court attendants (possibly 'mistranslated' eunuchs), in Attic painting, see Miller 1988, 86-87. For Attic feminizing of Persian clothing ('rider-costume' rather than court robes) in the fifth century, see Miller 1997, p. 156-187.

(even though it is partly at the expense of his dignity). Pausanias' commentary on the statue claims that the athlete demonstrated his power at the invitation of the king. His undeniable success still had positive implications (in the retrospective tradition) for his status. The choices made in this comprehensively negative visual inversion of a royal audience still demonstrate some understanding of its value to the foreign subject or visitor in the Achaemenid court.

A second, rather more famous, Greek adaptation of the royal audience also seems to play on its structure to cast the wisdom of the Persian king into question. The vase of the Persians, of the Darius painter, from Apulia, shows a developed Greek portrayal of the Persian court on one face of a volute krater (fig.8).⁷⁹ Usually dated to a period slightly later than the Poulydamas statue base, around the end of the third quarter of the fourth century BC, it is often interpreted as a portrayal of an historical drama or well-known incident surrounding the Persian invasion of Greece or the Ionian revolt.⁸⁰ In the regimented three scenes, the Great King and his Graeco-Persian court take up the middle register. The figure in audience, dressed in Greek travelling clothes, confidently addresses him from the right while a spearbearer attends the king behind the throne on the left.⁸¹ Some elements seem to adapt iconographic ingredients of the Achaemenid audience scene with some understanding of their original context.

The two *thumateria* do not define the king's space in the audience, but instead delimit the space occupied by his treasurer below.⁸² Sacks of silver and the nested, weighed phialae which formed another transportable form of bullion within the

⁷⁹ Naples 3253. Trendall & Campitoglou 1982, 494, pl.174,1 (discovered in 1851).

⁸⁰ Above n.79 & Trendall & Webster 1971, 112. The annotations, particularly of the king's name as 'Darius' and the participation of Greece and 'Deceit' support a story involving Darius I, and the costumes clearly owe a lot to the popular incarnations of Oriental kings on the stage. But the situation could still be more generic and the elements transferrable – there were three kings of the same name to evoke, with the contemporaneous troubles of the last perhaps also being a significant additional stratum (the roughly contemporary statue base of Poulydamas apparently represents Darius II; in audience stories involving Daniel, Esther and even Themistocles, the identities of kings become merged and indistinguishable as a single historical character, see below).

⁸¹ There is no fan bearer (a more familiar character to Greek eyes, substituted on other vases for the flywhisk bearer seen at Persepolis, and on some seals, where a square fan was traditionally shown in Elamite and Assyrian glyptic images of 'banquets', e.g. Collon 1987, nos.291, 338, 406) but a spear bearer stands behind the king beyond the limit of the baldachin on the Hundred-Columned Hall examples (the apadana audience scenes have a standard-bearer in the same position); one of the two attendants behind the throne in these examples is the king's weapon bearer (with no spear). The peculiar hooked dagger also held by the spearbearer is related to the 'halberd' carried by earlier attendants to the oriental audience scene in Attic vase painting (Miller 1988, 82 with references n.17 & 18 on this generic guard type and the uncertain derivation of the weapon).

⁸² The forms of these thymateria are less similar to the outlines impressed by the Daskyleion seal than they are to examples from enthroned figure compositions on scarab seals distributed across the Mediterranean in the sixth to fourth centuries, for example BM ANE 136025, Collon 1990, 37 fig.24c. Another use of a more widely intelligible form?

empire, are brought to be counted in the king's wealth.⁸³ The right-hand *thumaterion* forms a barrier over which the first of three kneeling Persian subjects reaches towards the king. The kneeling figures are paralleled in roughly contemporary uses in Egyptian iconography, such as the ethnic symbols on the base of the Egyptian-style statue of Darius I found at Susa.⁸⁴ On the top right of the composition, on the fringe of a divine scene in which Greece receives greater attention and privilege, the figure of Asia listens to a guiding figure called 'Deceit' (*apate*). This seems to refer to the rhetoric of Darius' Bisitun inscription in which he identified revolts in the empire on his accession to the spread of 'the Lie', versions of which circulated from the end of the sixth century onwards.⁸⁵ In Persepolis, the shielding symbol of the benevolent Ahuramazda covered the very top of each royal audience scene on either door jamb or within the ornamented baldachin, but here, Zeus favours another cause. The word 'Persai' on the podium on which the Greek visitor stands explicitly refers to the Achaemenid context of the scene visualised – possibly it is the title of the drama portrayed, but it is more likely to describe the location, in the royal court of the city of the Persians.⁸⁶

The scene is conceived of entirely in Greek style and Greek conceptions of Persian features, but structurally plays on the format of the audience scene in order to give a sceptical view of the Achaemenid hierarchy. In both the Poulydamas base and Darius vase, the Persian king is remade in an image recognizable to the Greek imagination, but in a way that still exploits the space of the Achaemenid court. In both, the metaphorical hierarchy which held the enthroned king at the top of a power structure above his subjects' heads, and below the supervision of a beneficent deity, is inverted. But the sociable court and

⁸³ To see these figures as a visual reference to the tributary / presentation symbolism of the apadana reliefs might be stretching the detailed understanding of imagery in Persia too far, but elements of procession or presentation could have moved with the enthroned king in glyptic images. For a summary evidence for 'nested' phialai in bullion weights, see Gunter & Root 1998, 9-10, with references to work by D.M. Lewis and M. Vickers, p.31 ns.34 & 35.

⁸⁴ Stronach 1974 & see Boardman 2000, fig.3.36b. Made in Egypt and at one time displayed at Heliopolis, the statue later stood on the inside of one monumental gate leading to and from the raised platform of the palace complex at Susa, along with other sculpture. See Root's discussion of the evolution of subjects underfoot (1979, 144ff.), the arm gestures here perhaps intimating praise, support or presentation (1979, 146). The vase's kneeling subjects are perhaps a playful appropriation of this imagery.

⁸⁵ Schmitt 1991, 73-74 (DB IV,88-92). The text was designed to be disseminated through copying and translation; for the Elephantine Aramaic copy, see references in Sims-Williams 1981,1. Darius' ethical moulding of his conquests made enough impact to be thoroughly satirized by Herodotus (3.72) when he made his Darius sophistically equate truth and falsehood. The increased abstraction of moral values in royal inscriptions is commented on by Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993.

⁸⁶ The idea that 'Persai' in fourth century Greek authors (eg. Xen. Cyr.8.7.1) is an adaptation of 'Parsa' the Old Persian name for the city (and province) is not a new one (see Miller 1997, 114 with references n.31). It predates the dominance of 'Persepolis' in the Alexander historians. That 'Persai' here refers to location rather than a tragic drama is also thought most likely by John Boardman (personal communication).

the audience space still structures the imagined setting for the demonstration of skill by the visiting outsider.

A late literary source illustrates the degree to which the visual image of an audience with the Persian king seems to have become embedded in generic stories of Greek encounters with the Achaemenid court. Philostratus' *ecphrasis* of Themistocles addressing the Persian king in Babylon, one of a second or third century CE collection of *Imagines*, echoes many of the features of the Graeco-Achaemenid audience as we see it portrayed by the Darius painter.⁸⁷

(1) A Greek among barbarians, a man among the unmanly, louche and luxury-loving, with a very Athenian-looking cloak, I think he pronounces some wise saying to them, trying to change them.. [Here] are Medes, and the centre of Babylon and the royal standard of the gold eagle on a shield, and the king on a golden throne embossed with ornamentation like a peacock... The court is also gold, for it seems like it is not painted, but it is painted like a real structure – we breath in incense and myrrh, with which the barbarians pollute the freedom of the air; and one spearbearer is conferring with another about the Greek, in awe of him as he begins to realise his great achievements. (2) For I think that Themistocles the son of Neocles has come from Athens to Babylon... and that he is discussing with the king how indebted Xerxes was to him while he was commander of the Greek forces. His Median environment does not intimidate him, he is as confident as if standing on a rostrum; and his language is not in his native form, but he speaks like a Mede, which he took the trouble to learn there. If you're sceptical, look at his audience, how their eyes show understanding and look at Themistocles, whose head is tilted like a speaker's, but the look in his eyes shows hesitation over what he is saying, since it is newly learned.⁸⁸

Philostratus' description, although purporting to be of a real wall painting, need not be evidence of the actual existence *and* survival of one showing Themistocles and a Persian king in conversation.⁸⁹ As in the two visual examples which we have seen, the conventional themes of Greek austerity and cleverness are contrasted with Persian luxury and complacency. The description dwells particularly on details which take the image out of the purely visual register and evoke other senses engaged in the scene. Philostratus doesn't describe *thumateria*, but does allude to catching the scent of frankincense and myrrh with which 'the barbarians pollute the freedom of the air'. The talkative court surroundings are evoked with his emphasis on the mutterings of spearbearers marvelling at the

⁸⁷ A comparison also made in the context of wall painting in the Persian empire, by Kaptan 1996, 265 & 2002, v.1, 38.

⁸⁸ Philostr. *Imag.* 2.31. For the uncertain identities of the Philostrati see the summary in *OCD*³.

⁸⁹ Although it may be relevant that a more direct connection between the Darius painter and mural genres is also often made with reference to the Alexander mosaic, discussed by Cohen 1997, 64-68. The selection of this theme as a subject for description must owe much to the ongoing stereotyping of Eastern monarchies using archaic models in the Roman period.

visiting Greek. The process of language, communication and understanding is particularly emphasised by Philostratus. An educated reader's subconscious literary commentary on the scene might include the sage-like words reported as Themistocles' advice to the king in late fifth to fourth century sources, particularly his warning that, 'a man's discourse was like a piece of tapestry, when spread open it displays its figures; but when it is folded up, they are hidden and lost.'⁹⁰ Themistocles thus took his first steps to great esteem as an adviser in the Persian court.

The narrative signposts available for images of the Greek in audience, such as the Darius vase or Poulydamas relief, contrast with the absence of specificity in the dynastic image at Persepolis. The audience scene seems to have been a visual structure which could be used both to express the self-definition of the ruling dynasty and the locally nuanced narratives of particular groups subject to royal power. The mutations of the image run parallel to a wider genre of encounters between individuals and the king. Philostratus' late synthesis of image and text links the audience scene with a range of narratives in which a subject impresses the Persian king with their skill or beneficence towards him. The individual's qualities and value are often directly linked to the his or her ethnicity. Characteristics such as religious belief and political dissent mark their difference from other groups. The folkloric genre proportionally takes up most of the anecdotes involving direct encounters with the king.⁹¹

Biographically narrated tales of competitive courtiers and career intrigue in the royal court existed in Akkadian literature from the Middle Babylonian period onwards.⁹² With the territorial expansion of the Achaemenid period, they become notably more international and their strong presence in the late fifth and fourth century survives as a genre, particularly in religious literature, well beyond.⁹³ With some variation, the stories tell of their protagonist's elevation from poverty, constraint or some form of exile to an honoured position close to the monarch, as an adviser or diplomatic intermediary, usually within a vaguely defined royal space such as the palace or procession. Like aspiring actors in Hollywood waiting the table of a movie mogul, the point of discovery, where the king realises the qualities of his subject in audience, remains a central point in the narrative. Themistocles, whose moment of recognition is clearly described as occurring in a formal (and difficult to reach) audience with the king, remains one of the most

⁹⁰ Plut. *Vit. Them.* 29.3.

⁹¹ Griffiths (1987) provides the clearest examination of this story model in an Achaemenid context, using a sophisticated example of the type in Herodotus, the adventures of the doctor Democedes in the court of Darius I (3.129-138). The strong presence of the story type in Biblical literature is reflected in the relevant scholarship, see Niditch and Doran 1977.

⁹² Van der Toorn 2001. For a detailed introduction to the society of scholars in late Assyrian and Babylonian scribal centres and courts, see Brown 2000, ch.1. I am grateful to Eleanor Robson for drawing my attention to this discussion. Scholars hailed from different city scribal schools across Mesopotamia and from Egypt, the Levant and Anatolia.

⁹³ For the most comprehensive published survey, see Wills 1990.

well known and developed ethnic heroes in the oriental court. Other anecdotes and biographical court tales of scholars or otherwise specially distinguished foreigners include Democedes and Ctesias the doctors, Poulydamas the pankratiast and notably the biblical Esther, who, like Themistocles, transmitted information to the king which saved him.⁹⁴ The plentiful strong parallels in the Aramaic and Hebrew biblical traditions, including Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, demonstrate that the tale of the foreigner communicating with the Persian king and benefitting from his favour in turn is not a Greek preserve. Egyptian examples include the biography of the apparently historical Udjahorresnet, inscribed on his own dedicatory statue.⁹⁵ Influenced by a tradition of Egyptian official biographies, the latter, a doctor like Democedes and Ctesias, relates his diplomatic skill in interpreting Egyptian cultural requirements to successive kings.⁹⁶ In all these languages, recurring emphasis is placed on the subjects' skill at interpretation, their ability to mediate and direct the king's power – quite often this interpretation is directly characterised as prophecy.⁹⁷ Frequently retrospective and magnified by nationalistic traditions, these glorifications of individual lives in the Achaemenid court place their protagonists at the heart (and sometimes origin) of Persian rule.

The tale of the encounter with the Persian king is the occasion for the demonstration of value and often ethnic distinction. The space around the throne enables subjects from outside the Persian nobility to take centre stage.⁹⁸ His or her self-definition through communication and beneficence assigns little action to the king, but requires that he remains as the witness and measure of all worth. The Persian king is the listener, the watcher, and the potential donor of status, the

⁹⁴ After the Hellenistic period, the gaining of privileged religious recognition through such an encounter with a monarch in particular became a popular and very durable genre, remaining current in the stories of royal conversion to or patronage of Zoroastrian (stories of Zoroaster in *Denkard*) and Christian religion in the East.

⁹⁵ Lloyd 1982.

⁹⁶ Compare Phanés of Halicarnassus, a bodyguard of Amasis who defected to aid Cambyses' invasion (Hdt.3.4 & 11). Several of these ethnic heroes preside over a transition of power (see n.96, below), and it is probably no coincidence that the story-type, particularly as shown in Themistocles' later career, has many similarities with Herodotus' tales of deposed kings in their successor's service: Croesus (advises Cyrus on Lydia, 1.155-56), Demaratus (gives Xerxes advice gaining him the kingship, 7.3; advises Xerxes about the Greeks, 7.101-104). The tradition of a 'retired' king also clings faintly to Nabonidus of Babylon (*FGrH* 680 F 9).

⁹⁷ The prophecies in this genre frequently foretell the fall and rise of kings. Apart from Daniel (the coming of 'Darius the Mede' ch.4-5), compare Babylonians advising future Median / Persian kings (Cyrus II, *FGrH* 90 F 66; Belesys to Arbaces, Diod.Sic.2.24,2 *FGrH* 688) and later, 'Cobares' warning Bessus at a banquet (Curt.7.8-19).

⁹⁸ The popularity with particular ethnic groups is perhaps a response to the dominance of Persians at the highest levels of government. Of two non-Persian figures in high royal administration in the fourth century, the success of Belesys / Belshunu, governor of Babylon, may have inspired tales of the legendary adviser of the same name (n.97, above). The biography of Datames - half Carian, half Scythian according to Cornelius Nepos - contains a particularly unusual royal audience, in which the general (in disguise as a hunter) delivers a Paphlagonian prince (whom he has trapped through his local connections and who he dresses up in satrapal robes and ornaments) into the presence of the king himself (*Nepos* 3).

impartial but crucially persuadable proof of value. One of the important things suggested by these stories is the breadth of popular expectation placed on the momentary encounter with the Great King; a brief exchange of communication or reward could continue to represent a source of status.⁹⁹ Individuals' participation in the Achaemenid hierarchy anywhere, perhaps even in the satrapal court, might be interpreted as a distant engagement with the monarch. Both commemoration of and aspiration to this engagement may have been imagined in the form of the royal audience. In comparison to the multilingual body of meritocratic stories, the structure of the audience image is an economical snapshot; in some artistic contexts it clearly embodied the narrative cues for the retelling of an exemplary life in international relations.

The dense layer of symbolic visual accretions on some versions of the audience extant within the empire, such as that of Djedherbes, remain difficult to interpret. They suggest a customizing response to Achaemenid iconography equivalent to the imaginative embedding of the king in regional narratives. The king's image in these examples was further transformed and personalized, each personal commissioning of a new object or memorial conjured a king defined by his subject's identity. The audience scene is adapted along with other developed images of social interaction such as the hunt, in the articulation of local hierarchies interacting with Achaemenid rule, shown on Anatolian funerary monuments and Sidonian sarcophagi.¹⁰⁰ All could be adapted to express the status of local hierarchies. This adaptation could be taken to the edge of satire or subversion, as demonstrated in the negatively tilted Greek variations, reflecting back on the participants a sense of cultural superiority. Nevertheless, the king remains the central reference point for consequent reputation and reward. Retrospectives of the end of Achaemenid rule seem to take the adaptation of the royal audience beyond the obliteration of this central protagonist.

There are two forms of epilogue to the audience with the Persian king provided by the end of the dynasty at Alexander's invasion. The first, textual theme occurs in two writers who portray the wise commentaries of different companions upon Alexander's enthronement in two capitals. Both play on the roles of his courtiers

⁹⁹ The Achaemenid administrative system worked in such a way that precedent for privileges, particularly for religious communities, was something referred to across many generations (e.g. the preservation of privileges granted to the sanctuary of Apollo at Magnesia or the evocation of early Persian protection given to Judaeen temples at Jerusalem and Elephantine (in Biblical and contemporary texts, respectively); see Briant 1996, p.507-509 with references. That such privileges could be claimed as a personal achievement is evident from the biography of Udjahorresnet. The story or image of such an encounter transmitting status to both the individual and the group he represents has most power in retrospect for those wishing to use it as a hierarchical prop, leading perhaps to their use in funerary monuments.

¹⁰⁰ Adapted audience scenes with (probably) enthroned local authority figures appear amidst the campaigns on the Xanthian Nereid monument, on one side of the 'Satrap sarcophagus' from Sidon (compared with further enthronement scenes by Kaptan 1996, p.266, for the 'Satrap sarcophagus' see Jidejian 1971, pl.78.

and the implications of interpreting royal symbols during a transitional phase in the monarchy. In Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, Demaratus the Corinthian says something obsequiously fatuous on seeing Alexander take his place on the Persian throne at Persepolis.¹⁰¹ Bursting into tears he exclaims 'that the Greeks who died before seeing Alexander seated on Darius' throne were deprived of great pleasure.' Beyond the comment's recognition of Alexander's status in royal audience, the surrounding high emotion resonates strangely with the second anecdote about the Macedonians enthronement.¹⁰²

The mystifying detail supplied in the slightly different version of a prophecy in front of the throne at Susa, included by Quintus Curtius Rufus, is more interesting.¹⁰³ There, a table is placed under Alexander's feet when his legs prove too short to reach the floor. The anecdote, garbled or manipulated, seems to be a play on the visual and probably ceremonial convention of the king's footstool.¹⁰⁴ But the table is called a banqueting table by, this time, a tearful eunuch, at which Philotas prophecies it as an omen of Darius' ultimate defeat.¹⁰⁵ The anecdote, particularly its lacrymosity, probably emerges from the recurrent anxiety surrounding the physical possessions of the king and the symbolism of the royal environment. In Mesopotamian tradition, the sight of the wrong person seated on the throne was associated with the substitute king ritual, only enacted when omens indicated the king's life was in danger.¹⁰⁶ In this case, the fatal omen applies to the existing king Darius III; Alexander, unlike the usual substitutes who sat temporarily on the throne, was not put to death. This particular rationalisation of the visual image of enthronement in audience represents the subversion by a conqueror, of mechanisms designed to preserve the status quo.

The second epilogue is a visual one, and one of the most famous copies of the audience scene so far detected. The late fourth century royal sarcophagus from Sidon, customarily called the Alexander sarcophagus because of its image of Alexander in battle, is assumed to have been constructed for Abdalonymos, the king whom he installed.¹⁰⁷ The distinction of Macedonians or Greeks and Persians by colour detail and attributes is used to emphasise their combination in conflict

¹⁰¹ Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 37: '[Alexander] took his seat for the first time under the golden canopy on the royal throne...'

¹⁰² That his comments coincided with Alexander's assumption of both the Achaemenid king's environment, and his gifting power in the shape of the royal treasuries, was no doubt fortuitous.

¹⁰³ Curt. 5.2.13.

¹⁰⁴ Athen. 12.514a (citing Dinon).

¹⁰⁵ But in an inversion of this positive communication, Philotas' downfall results from his not transmitting crucial information about a plot to his king, Curt. 6.8.1ff. (unlike Esther and Mordekai). The 'banqueting table' is not such a baffling substitution in the iconographic context opened up by cylinder seal imagery, and may also originate in a play on the king's attributes in audience.

¹⁰⁶ Labat 1946, cf. Briant 1997, 882-883. This episode has parallels to later signs that the substitute king ritual was enacted after Alexander's return to Babylon in 323 BC, in order to avert dreadful omens.

¹⁰⁷ Curt. 6.1.15f. von Graeve 1970, 125-127.

or in cooperation, the political melting pot in which the occupant came to power. The surviving painted decoration preserves the ghost of a royal audience on the inside of a carved Persian shield (fig.9).¹⁰⁸ As in DS4 and other glyptic representations, the king in the sarcophagus scene appears to raise his hand in greeting rather than holding a staff. But the artist also appears to have tried to reproduce detail reminiscent of the Persepolitan originals in the One Hundred Columned Hall, including the decorative colouring.¹⁰⁹ In von Graeve's publication of the sarcophagus, and the Tilia's parallel discussion of colour decoration at Persepolis, the conclusion offered was that the artist visited Persepolis after its fall to Alexander and sketched the design from the architecture itself.¹¹⁰ But the evident spread of the audience scene in the western half of the empire, particularly the detailed evocation of DS4, should render such a posited research trip unnecessary. It is not impossible that a painted copy existed in the environs of Sidon, but there were also mobile media carrying colour detail, including inlaid jewellery and painted leather or textile panels, such as those reported as decorating the catafalque of Alexander as it travelled back across western Asia.¹¹¹ Of course, it is entirely possible that the scene could merely have been copied from a painted shield.

This particular quotation of the audience image is additionally compelling because of its context. The shield belongs to a Persian engaged in a duel on one of the short ends of the sarcophagus. In contrast to the pseudo-historical battle featuring Alexander on one long side, the warriors pitched against Persians here are naked, cast in the emblematic, heroic mode. A Persian archer on the left of a series of three duels retreats from the attack of a Greek warrior. The enthroned king and approaching petitioner can be discerned on either side of his arm on the ineffectually everted shield.¹¹² Whether an accurate reflection of shield decoration or a metaphorical addition, the sarcophagus is unique in presenting the audience scene within a frame of its reception, held by an outside observer. Here, it appears to be a personal talisman of contact with or allegiance to the king. Alternatively, its placement, post-conquest, on the useless shield of a doomed, anonymous soldier might serve as an inversion of the supportive power of the throne-bearers at Persepolis.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Von Graeve 1970, pl.taf.32-34.1, 69.2-70.3.

¹⁰⁹ Another shield device on the sarcophagus apparently quotes from the other door jambs of the same building in showing a two-figure heroic combat (von Graeve 1970, 110); adapted images of both this and the simplified image of an enthroned regal figure were also relatively common in Sidonian coinage of the fourth century (see Boardman 2000, fig.5.53, fig.5.55-6 – with divine names).

¹¹⁰ Von Graeve 1970, 108-10; Tilia 1979, 45.

¹¹¹ Alexander's catafalque: Diod. Sic. 18.26.6 - 27.1 & comment, Root 1994, 37.

¹¹² Von Graeve 1970, taf.69.2.

¹¹³ Perhaps by coincidence, the shield of the (distorted) fallen Persian footsoldier in the Alexander Mosaic, reflects only his mournful face as the chariot of the distracted king looms dangerously over him, Cohen 1997, Pl.Vib, fig.5.

These subverted echoes suggest a striking trend of sophisticated adjustment of the ideologically tuned Achaemenid audience scene to local interests from its formulation under Darius I until the very end of the dynasty. The scene is not the most popular iconography to evoke the image of the Persian king, but its use often appears conscious, pointed and intended (however unrealistically) to elevate the status of specific individuals and groups. Likewise, the extremely widespread narrative traditions of advantageous promotion within the royal court were readily comprehensible by a huge audience. Anecdotes of obstruction and formality within the palace heightened the achievement of such access. Nevertheless, the themes of mutual recognition, access and communication that both visual and narrative forms of the imaginary court articulate, are related to the ideology formulated in text and image at Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam. The emphasis placed there on engaging subjects in the recognition of legitimate kingship, while offering the prospect of reward for individual service, seems to have provoked responses. These responses appropriated the rewarding figure of the king as patron of the causes and interests of specific groups. The closer to the king an honoured courtier or subject was envisaged, the more he and those he was representing could claim royal esteem, understanding and privilege. The idea and image of the royal audience offered a universal space in a multi-ethnic empire for an imaginative investment in imperial rule.